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**INDEPENDENCE SEAPORT MUSEUM'S HISTORIC SHIPS,  
CRUISER OLYMPIA AND SUBMARINE BECUNA,  
ARE NAMED BEST MUSEUM SHIP IN USA TODAY 10BEST'S 2025 READERS' CHOICE AWARD**



Philadelphia, PA (February 19, 2025)—Independence Seaport Museum, steward of the *Olympia*, a nineteenth-century cruiser that is the oldest steel warship afloat in the world, and the *Becuna*, a World War II-era submarine, is delighted to announce that these two historic ships are winners in the 2025 Readers' Choice Award for Best Museum Ship by USA TODAY 10Best.

“This is a singular honor for the Independence Seaport Museum, and we are so appreciative of the nationwide support in the voting,” states museum President and CEO Peter S. Seibert. “Our friends from San Francisco to Detroit cast votes for these historic ships.”

USA TODAY 10Best editors carefully curated a list of 20 nominees by a panel of subject matter experts as best in the country before being voted on by the public. As described by USA TODAY 10Best, “each museum ship provides an immersive experience, where one can appreciate the engineering marvels of the past, learn about the lives of sailors, and gain a deeper understanding of the nation’s naval heritage. From battleships and submarines to historic sailing ships, each of these nominees tells its own captivating story.”

Independence Seaport Museum is unique among the other historic ships that received the Readers' Choice Award in that *Olympia* and *Becuna* are not stand-alone museums. Rather, they are large artifacts in the ISM's vast collection. They are two important objects that help to tell the broader story of maritime history.

*Olympia* was placed into service in February 1895 and has called Philadelphia home since 1922. She became a museum in 1957 and has been docked alongside *Becuna* at Penn's Landing since 1976. The ship has an important place in American naval history: It was from *Olympia*'s conning tower under the forward bridge where Captain Charles Gridley received the famous command from Commodore (later Admiral) George Dewey, "You may fire when ready, Gridley." It was this order that started the Battle of Manila Bay in 1898, a key event of what would become known as the Spanish-American War. *Olympia* also was tasked in 1921, before being decommissioned, with bringing remains of the American Unknown Soldier from World War I to Washington, D.C. from Le Havre, France. After reaching the United States, the soldier was buried at Arlington National Cemetery and was later joined on the plaza by Unknown Soldiers from other global conflicts. While in service, *Olympia* hosted numerous dignitaries including the then Assistant Secretary of the Navy and future president Theodore Roosevelt.

*Becuna*, a World War II-era submarine, launched into service in January 1944, just nine months after construction started. "Becky" has called Philadelphia home since 1969. She was moved to Penn's Landing and opened as a museum in 1976 as a part of the bicentennial celebration of the signing of the Declaration of Independence and has been docked alongside *Olympia* ever since. Her service history is impressive: During her 25 years of service, the submarine fought in the Pacific during World War II, acted as a training vessel for the submarine school in New London, Connecticut, assisted in ice research above the Arctic Circle, and was part of the GUPPY modernization program. (The Greater Underwater Propulsion Power Program or GUPPY was initiated by the United States Navy after World War II to improve the submerged speed, maneuverability, and endurance of its submarines.; the "Y" in the acronym was added for pronounceability.) *Becuna* is the only GUPPY 1-A submarine remaining in the world.

For anyone who would like to embark on a unique journey through maritime history, a visit to Philadelphia's Independence Seaport Museum and to step aboard its *Olympia* and *Becuna* is a must stop on their travel docket.

### **About Independence Seaport Museum**

*The Independence Seaport Museum (ISM), founded in 1960 as the Philadelphia Maritime Museum, encourages visitors to discover Philadelphia's river of history and world of connections. Stewards of the Olympia, a nineteenth-century cruiser, and the Becuna, a World War II-era submarine, ISM is home to interactive and award-winning exhibitions, one of the largest collections of historic maritime artifacts in the world and a boatbuilding workshop. Accredited by the American Association of Museums since the 1970s, it is a premier, year-round destination adjacent to Spruce Street Harbor Park on Penn's Landing. Visit daily from 10 a.m. to 5*

p.m. and see our full schedule of programs and events at [phillyseaport.org](https://www.phillyseaport.org). Visit <https://www.phillyseaport.org/admissions-hours-of-operation/> to learn about ticket packages and guided tour options.

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